

JOHN VII (ALIAS ANDRONICUS) PALAEOLOGUS

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It is a commonplace to point to the scarcity and deficiency of the Byzantine sources when beginning an article dealing with events at the end of the fourteenth century. Byzantinists strove to fill the gaps in the Greek sources with information collected from Oriental or Western ones, but a lot of confusion prevails resulting mainly from the activities of a refractory branch of the Palaeologan dynasty, i.e., Andronicus IV (the first-born son of the Emperor John V) and his son John VII. In this note I would like to draw attention to a passage by the Genoese historian Giorgio Stella; this passage may improve our understanding of some of the sources which mention an Emperor Andronicus at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century.

Stella, while reporting Manuel II's journey to Europe (1399–1403), intending to beseech Western help for the crumbling Byzantine Empire, wrote: *Sui ergo loco nepotem ejus Calojanem, alias vocatum Andronicum, olim sibi aemulum, et inde amabilem, linquens, Occidentales regiones adivit.*¹ According to Stella, therefore, John VII, who reigned in Constantinople during Manuel's absence, was also called Andronicus.

The question that arises, of course, is whether this piece of information can be accepted as historically true; a quick survey of some of the facts does indeed substantiate it. Stella was a contemporary observer of the events of those years which he chronicled in his *Annales*.² Moreover, his remarks concerning John VII gain credibility because John, as well as his father Andronicus IV, was closely connected with the Genoese³ and, consequently, familiar to Stella.

¹ Georgius Stella, *Annales Genuenses*, RerItalSS, XVII, col. 1196.

² On Stella, see the detailed study by G. Balbi, "Giorgio Stella e gli 'Annales Genuenses,'" in *Miscellanea Storica Ligure*, II (Milan, 1961), 125–215.

³ R. J. Loenertz, "Fragment d'une lettre de Jean V Paléologue à la Commune de Gênes,

Aside from these arguments, there is one fact that is much more convincing: several sources, previously alleged to be wrong or confused, become clear and understandable if one bears in mind that John VII was also called Andronicus. These are the following:

1. The narrative of the pilgrim Ignatius of Smolensk.⁴ Ignatius, an eyewitness of the revolt of John VII in 1390 against his grandfather John V and his uncle Manuel II, reported that the soldiers in the service of the rebel, when entering Constantinople, shouted the acclamation "Polla ta eti Andronikou" and obliged the citizens to repeat the same phrase. As the acclamation was purported to be "Polla ta eti Ioannou," many an interpretation has been given to this passage⁵ which, taking into account the evidence of Stella, needs no further explanation.

2. Two entries in the registers of the expenses of the Genoese colony of Pera of the year 1390⁶ mention a certain *Chir Andronicus* as emperor (*dominum imperatorem Chirandronicum*) and as a Palaeologus (*domino Chir*

1389–1391," *BZ*, 51 (1958), 37–40; J. W. Barker, "John VII in Genoa: A Problem in Late Byzantine Source Confusion," *OCP*, 28 (1962), 213–38.

⁴ B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires Russes en Orient*, I, 1 (Geneva, 1889), 129–57 (for the events in question, see esp. 140–42).

⁵ G. T. Kollias, 'Η ἀνταρσία Ἰωάννου Ζ' ἐναυτίον Ἰωάννου Ε' Παλαιολόγου, in 'Ελληνικά, 12 (1952), 34–64 (esp. 57–61); A. Christophopoulos, Περὶ τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς ἀναδείξεως τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορος, in 'Ἐπιστ. Επ. Φιλ. Σχ. Α'9., 13 (1962–63), 390–93; N. Oikonomides, Σημειώσα γιὰ τὸν Ἀνδρόνικο Ε' Παλαιολόγο (1390), in Θήσαυρίσματα, 5 (1968), 23–31 (esp. 27–28).

⁶ *Recepimus die XVIIa Octobris de LXXXIº in domino Chir Andronico Paleologo perperos IIIº*: N. Jorga, "Notes et Extraits pour servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e siècle, Comptes de la Colonie de Pétra," *ROL*, 4 (1896), 71; *Alia barcha que portavit dominus Potestas ad dominum Imperatorem Chirandronicum . . .*; L. T. Belgrano, "Documenti riguardanti la Colonia Genovese di Pera," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 13 (1877–84), 151.

Andronico Paleologo). The existence of an emperor bearing this name in 1390 can be justified satisfactorily only if he is identified as John VII.⁷

3. A short chronicle of the years 1221–1460.⁸ This text does not constitute as reliable a source as the description of the eyewitness Ignatius of Smolensk or the registers of Pera. However, it should be mentioned, for its anonymous author states that in the year 1399, while Manuel II was in Europe, his “brother” Andronicus was left to reign in Constantinople, and that, when Manuel returned, Andronicus was sent to Thessalonica to rule there until his death. There is no doubt that this is John VII. The qualification “brother” is certainly due to the anonymous author’s confusion; but this confusion could well derive from the second name of John VII.

4. A passage from Laonikos Chalkokondylas, which reads as follows: “John [V] made an alliance with Murad who had crossed to Europe recently, and he took the daughter of the king of the Bulgarians as wife for his son Andronicus and she bore him sons: the oldest was Andronicus, the juniors Demetrius and Manuel, and Theodorus.”⁹ The marriage of Andronicus IV to Maria, the daughter of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Alexander Asan, is a well-established historical fact.¹⁰ But what about the sons? It is generally accepted that Andronicus IV had only one son, John VII. Despite the fact that Chalkokondylas reports many of John’s activities, he seems to ignore him when enumerating his presumed brothers. For these reasons this passage of his *History*

⁷ Conjectures about the identity of the Chir Andronicus in question were made by Oikonomides, *op. cit.*; also by J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), 78 note 207, 245 note 77.

⁸ P. Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I (Vienna, 1975), 178–88 (esp. 184–85).

⁹ Ιωάννης μὲν οὖν τῷ τε Ἀμουράτῃ νεωστὶ ἐς τὴν Εύρωπην διαβάντι ξυμαχίαν ἐποιήσατο, καὶ τὴν τοῦ Μυσῶν βασιλέως θυγατέρα ἡγάγετο ἐπὶ τῷ παιδὶ αὐτοῦ Ἀνδρονίκῳ, ἀφ’ οὗ ἐγένοντο αὐτῷ πταιδες, πρεσβύτερος μὲν Ἀνδρόνικος, Δημήτριος δὲ καὶ Ἐμμανουὴλος οἱ νεώτεροι καὶ θεόδωρος: Laonici Chalcocandylae, *Historiarum Demonstrationes*, ed. E. Darkó (Budapest, 1922), I, 34.

¹⁰ Barker, *Manuel II*, 5–6, 8 note 18.

has been rejected or completely disregarded.¹¹ One can express the view that Chalkokondylas did not omit John VII while writing about the family of Andronicus IV but simply mentioned him in this case by his other name, Andronicus. As for the other sons, I shall give a few observations later in this article. For the moment, it is perhaps worth elaborating a little on the second name of John VII.

It is well known that, according to the Byzantine (or, more generally, to the Greek Orthodox) tradition, individuals when baptized received one name only. The case of John VII would have been most exceptional if he had been given two names, such as John-Andronicus, when baptized. Nevertheless, his two names could be explained, since there are instances during the last centuries of Byzantium of individuals changing their names. The son of Michael II, the lord of Epirus, for instance, was called Demetrius, but when his father died he changed his name, taking that of his father in order to venerate his memory.¹² The second son of the Emperor Basil of Trebizond, the well-known Alexius III the Grand Comnenus, was first called John; later he changed his name to Alexius, which was the name of his grandfather.¹³ Another example can be produced, that of Francesco II Gattilusi, first called Jacopo, then, after his father’s death, Francesco, like his father.¹⁴ Although the Gattilusi, being Catholic and

¹¹ A. Th. Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen, 1259–1453* (Speyer a. Rh., 1938), 52; according to this author, Andronicus IV perhaps had two daughters as well as his son John VII.

¹² Ο τοῦ Μιχαήλ δεσπότου υἱὸς ὑστάτος, Δημήτριος μὲν τὸ κατάρχας λεγόμενος, θανόντος δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς τούνομα κατὰ μνήμην ἔκεινον ἀνταλλαξάμενος: Pachymeres, I, Bonn ed. (1835), 439; cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford, 1957), 198, 212.

¹³ Ἔγεννηθη δὲ Κομνηνὸς κύρῳ Ἰωάννης, δὲ ἐπονομασθεὶς Ἀλέξιος, δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ κύρου Βασιλείου δὲ δεύτερος...; δὲ β’ υἱὸς κύρου Βασιλείου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, δὲ κύρῳ Ἰωάννης, δὲ ἐπονομασθεὶς κατά τὸν πάππον κύρῳ Ἀλέξιος: O. Lampsides, Μιχαήλ τοῦ Πλαναρέτου περὶ τῶν Μεγάλων Κομνηνῶν, in ‘Αρχ.Πόντ., 22 (1958), 65, 69; cf. E. Janssens, *Trebizonde en Colchide* (Brussels, 1969), 112.

¹⁴ Ήν δὲ καὶ τρίτος υἱὸς ἔκεινον δύναματι Ἰάκωβος, δις μετά τὸν θάνατον τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐκλήθη Φραντζέσκος: Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 220; cf. W. Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge, 1921), 319.

Italian, were outside the Byzantine tradition, the change of name can be included here owing to their relationship with the Palaeologi.

The enumeration of these cases allows us to guess that John VII changed his name by taking that of his father in order to honor the latter's memory. A summary of certain facts explains his action. His father, Andronicus IV, elder son of John V, was the legitimate heir to the Byzantine throne. For reasons already analyzed by Byzantinists, he was removed by his father, and his brother, Manuel II, was promoted as heir to the throne. However, Andronicus, enjoying the support of a considerable part of Byzantine society, managed to occupy Constantinople and reigned there from 1376 to 1379; after being expelled, he never gave up his rights to the throne.¹⁵ After his death, his son John VII followed his father's policy and considered himself the legitimate heir to the throne of Constantinople.¹⁶ There is no doubt that by adopting his father's name he could keep alive his father's memory as well as his cause.

According to the above-mentioned cases, and given these special circumstances, one could conjecture that John VII adopted his father's name immediately after the latter's death in 1385,¹⁷ but this hypothesis cannot be proved by the sources. However, it can be considered certain that he was called Andronicus in 1390, as he is mentioned by this name by two of his contemporaries: Ignatius of Smolensk and the bookkeeper (or perhaps bookkeepers) of the Genoese colony of Pera. The date is significant. For in that year John revolted and seized the Byzantine throne for approximately five months (April to September). One might think that John VII adopted and used the name Andronicus to facilitate his proclamation as emperor during his revolt against his grandfather, also named John. If

¹⁵ See Kollias' remarks, *op. cit.*, 41–53, and esp. Barker, *Manuel II*, 9–52.

¹⁶ Cf. the eloquent passage of Ducas: [John VII] λέγων καὶ διηγούμενος τὴν ἀδικίαν, ἦν ἔπαθεν παρὰ τοῦ πάτριου αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ ἀνέκειτο εἰς αὐτοὺς τὸ βασιλεῖον, δὲ ἀδικήσας αὐτοὺς ἔδωκε τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ δευτέρῳ οἴκῳ: Ducas, *Historia Turcobyzantina*, ed. B. Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 83.

¹⁷ On the date of Andronicus IV's death, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 51–52.

the soldiers in the rebel's service and the people of Constantinople acclaimed an Emperor John, the whole attempt would be carried out in confusion. On the contrary, by proclaiming an emperor bearing a different name—Andronicus—everyone in the capital would be aware of the ascent of a new emperor.

On the other hand, it must be emphasized that John VII himself did not use the name Andronicus when he became emperor. During his short reign following the revolt he concluded a treaty with Venice (June 1390), preserved in the original, in which, as well as in its official Latin translation, he appears as John.¹⁸ Moreover, in none of the Venetian documents of this period does John VII appear as Andronicus, despite the frequent mention of his name.¹⁹ While it seems as if the Venetians ignored his adopted name, on the contrary, the evidence of the sources, although scant, proves that he was familiar to the Genoese by this name.²⁰ The few contemporary Byzantine authors also seem to ignore the second name of John VII, perhaps because they were loyal to the legitimate branch of the Palaeologan dynasty and therefore disapproved of the second name of John VII, which by itself stirred up old passions within the imperial family.

Finally, it appears that John VII adopted his father's name temporarily and later relinquished it. Toward the very end of the fourteenth century he produced a son whom he named Andronicus.²¹ Once the name of his father was given to his son he himself had no

¹⁸ F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, III (Vienna, 1865), 135–44; G. M. Thomas, *Diplomaticarum Veneio-Levantinum*, II (Venice, 1899), 224–29.

¹⁹ On the Venetian documents of the period around 1390, see esp. N. Jorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră," *Analele Academiei Române*, ser. II, 36 (1913–14), 1093f.

²⁰ It should be remembered that in a Genoese document issued in February 1390, i.e., before the revolt, John VII appears as *Chaloiani*: Barker, "John VII in Genoa," 236–37.

²¹ G. T. Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor, Andronicus V Palaeologus (1400–1407?)," *JÖBG*, 16 (1967), 175–87; N. Oikonomides, "John VII Palaeologus and the Ivory Pyxis of Dumbarton Oaks," *DOP*, 31 (1977), 329–37.

further need of it, and for this reason he is mentioned only as John in all the contemporary sources referring to his activities in the fifteenth century until his death in 1408. It is remarkable, however, that two important authors of the fifteenth century, Stella and Chalkokondylas, as well as the anonymous author of the short chronicle mentioned above, kept the memory of his second name.

In the passage of Chalkokondylas cited above there is also mention of three more sons of Andronicus IV. As far as I know, Chalkokondylas is the only source reporting that there were any sons other than John VII. However, there are two non-Greek sources which should cause us to hesitate so that we do not just simply reject this passage of the Athenean historian. The first is the work of the Ottoman historian of the fifteenth century, Neshri, who, while narrating the last phase of the struggle between Mehemed çelebi and Musa çelebi (which ended with the death of the latter in 1413), reports that among those who fought on Mehemed's side was the son of the blind prince, Kör Tekfur oğlu.²² It is

²² Neşri Tarihi, *Kitâb-i Cihan-nümâ*, ed. F. R. Unat and M. A. Köymen (Ankara, 1957), II, 510–11 and note 2. On Neshri's source, see V. L. Ménage, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans* (London, 1964), 11–14, 64. N. Jorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (Gotha, 1908), I, 359, thinks that "Kör Tekfur" is "König Georg," the nephew of the Serbian Tsar Stephan; he does not quote sources. This identification seems very dubious, for it is difficult to admit that Kör (blind) is a distortion of the name George. Moreover, in case Jorga's source was Neshri, the identification is out of question, as the Ottoman historian writes about the son (oğlu) of the Kör Tekfur.

more than probable that the blind prince is Andronicus IV, who was blinded by his father after his revolt of 1373.²³ Given that John VII had been dead since 1408,²⁴ one can assume that Neshri is speaking of another son of Andronicus IV. The second source is the narrative of the embassy of Clavijo, who mentions another son of Andronicus IV, called Demetrius, whom he met during his stay in Constantinople. Although it becomes clear from the text that Clavijo confused Demetrius with John VII,²⁵ one wonders at the strange coincidence: Chalkokondylas and Clavijo, two quite unrelated sources, both mention a son of Andronicus IV named Demetrius.

Future research, I hope, will throw more light upon the family of Andronicus IV. After all, the existence of his grandson Andronicus was only quite recently revealed. This family produced many problems for the Palaeologan dynasty, for the Byzantine Empire in general, and eventually for Byzantinists; and so let the temporary change of the name of John VII be added to the rest of his acts which have caused and still cause headaches to modern scholars.

²³ R. J. Loenertz, "La première insurrection d'Andronic IV Paléologue (1373)," *EO*, 38 (1939), 334–45; F. Dölger, "Zum Aufstand der Andronikos IV. gegen seinen Vater Johannes V im Mai 1373," *REB*, 19 (= *Mélanges R. Janin*) (1961), 328–32; Barker, *Manuel II*, 19–22.

²⁴ Barker, *Manuel II*, 278.

²⁵ Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. F. López Estrada (Madrid, 1943), 56; cf. *idem*, *Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406*, trans. G. Lestrange (London, 1928), 87.